

now lying waste, for the remains of canals and *Jcanaats* attest that a process of local depopulation has been going on. It is the configuration of the country rather than anything else which accounts for the unpeopled wastes in some directions, and the constant succession of towns and populous villages in others.

Of the population thus distributed along hill slopes and on the plains at the feet of the ranges, there is no accurate record, and the total has been variously estimated at from six to nine millions. Estimates of the urban and village populations were in most cases supplied to me by the Persian local officials, but from these I am convinced that it is necessary to make a very liberal deduction. General Schindler, a gentleman for some years in the Persian Government service, who has travelled over a great part of Persia with the view of ascertaining its resources and condition, in the year 1885 estimated its population at 7,653,000. In his analysis the Christian and the Bakhtiari and Feili Lur populations are, according to present information, greatly under-estimated.

If I may venture to hazard an opinion, after travelling over a considerable area of Western Persia, it would be that the higher estimate is nearest the mark, for the natural increase in time of peace, as accepted by statisticians, is three-quarters per cent per annum, and Persia has had peace and freedom from famine for very many years.<sup>1</sup>

The country population consists of *rayats*

or permanent cultivators, and Ilyats or nomadic pastoral tribes. Coal-fields and lead and iron may hereafter produce commercial centres, but the industry of Persia at present may be said to be nearly altogether agricultural.

<sup>1</sup> On this subject there can be no better authority! than the Hon. George N. Curzon, M.P., who after careful study has estimated the total population of Persia at over nine millions.